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CHAUCERIANA

I

Troilus, 1, 687-88:

And witeth wel, that bothe two ben vices,
Mistrusten alle, or elles alle leve.

Cf. Seneca *Epistulae Morales* 1. 3. 4 (ed. Heinse, p. 5): *utrumque enim vitium est, et omnibus credere et nulli.*

Troilus, 1, 740-41:

For it is seyð men maketh ofte a yerde
With which the maker is himself y-beten.

Wander, in his *Sprichwoerter-Lexikon*, gives, under the caption *Ruthe*, a great many forms of the proverb, but none so close to Chaucer's as any of the seven from Provençal poetry given by Cnyrim in his *Sprichwoerter* (Nos. 779-85).

Troilus, 1, 963-66:

It far'th of som servise,
As plante a tree, or herbe, in sondry wise,
And on the morwe pulle it up as blive!
No wonder is, though it may never thrive.

Cf. Seneca *op. cit.* 1. 2. 3 (p. 3): *non convalescit planta, quae saepe transfertur.*

Troilus, 1, 1065-69. Professor Kittredge pointed out in *Modern Philology*, VII, 481 that this passage is derived from Geoffrey de Vinsauf, *Nova Poetria*, vss. 43-45 (in Leyser, *Historia Poetarum et Poematum Medii Aevi*, p. 864). Chaucer refers to the same work in B 4537 ff. It is to be further noted that the use of *color*, *colorare* in a rhetorical sense is very frequent in the *Nova Poetria*, frequent enough to suggest that Chaucer may have derived the usage from de Vinsauf, who, however, nowhere couples *color* with *figure*, as Chaucer sometimes does. Cf. *Nova Poetria*, vss. 201, 745, 746, 748, 879, 924, 928, 929, 946, 955, 957, 962, 988, 993, 995, 1023, 1024, 1037, 1038, etc. Chaucer's *Almena* for *Alcmena* (*Troilus*, 3, 1428) may be compared with *Almenam* in *Nova Poetria*, vs. 623.

Troilus, 2, 188-89:

Withouten hond, me semeth that in toun
For this miracle here I ech belle soun.

For the miraculous ringing of bells on joyful or solemn occasions references, chiefly from Germanic literature, may be found in Child's *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, I, 173, 231; III, 235, 519. My attention is called to this fact by Dr. W. G. Dodd's *Courtly Love in Chaucer and Gower*. I would add the following: Boccaccio, *Decamerone, Giornata Seconda, Novella Prima*: Per la qual cosa, o vero o non vero che si fosse, morendo egli, addivenne, secondo che i Trivigiani affermano, che nell' ora della sua morte le campane della maggior chiesa di Trivigi, tutte, senza essere da alcuno tirate, cominciarono a sonare. Il che in luogo di miracolo avendo, questo Arrigo esser santo dicevano tutti.

I have found four examples of rime royal in French poetry earlier than the fourteenth century. Cf. Conon de Béthune, ed. Wallensköld, pp. 282-85; Guiot de Provins, ed. Orr, *Chanson* iv; same in Wackernaegel xiii (from a fourteenth-century manuscript); anonymous (Wackernaegel xli); Gace Brulé, ed. Huet (*Société des Anciens Textes Français*), *Chanson* xiii (p. 31). Chaucer first introduced the stanza into English poetry. In all his French predecessors the stanza is used for lyric rather than for narrative; and even in Chaucer it often reverts to or continues the lyric tradition.

II

Canterbury Tales, B 4047-50. The belief that the cock crew exactly on the hour is alluded to in *Sir Gawayne and the Green Knight*, 2008:

Bi vch kok þat crue, he knwe wel þe steuen.

"By each cock that crew he knew well the hour."

B 4039-54. The best commentary on the colors of Chantecleer is the song given by Padelford in *The Cambridge History of English Literature* (II, 444-45), and by Cook in his excellent *Literary Middle English Reader* (p. 429). The *Nun's Priest's Tale* has several echoes of early English lyric poetry which add to the burlesque effect of the whole. And I am inclined to believe that Chaucer was

acquainted with some version—earlier than the extant fifteenth-century manuscript—of the song in question, and had it in mind while drawing the portrait of Chanteceleer. To suppose that the song in question echoed Chaucer is of course perfectly possible, but to do so is to sacrifice something of the spirit of burlesque in the *Nun's Priest's Tale*. Other echoes of early English song in the *Tale* are B 4084: *herte in holde*; and B 4069: *My lief is faren in londe*.

B 4108. *tool*, "weapon." Cf. *Romeo and Juliet*, I, 1, 31–32: Draw thy *tool*; here comes two of the house of Montagues; and Milton, *Samson Agonistes*, 137:

In scorn of their proud arms and warlike *tools*.

B 4243. *wlatsom*. That the *w* of initial *wl* was pronounced by Chaucer might be inferred from the evidence of the alliterative verse of his age. The evidence is not, however, wholly satisfactory, since no contemporary alliterative verse occurs in Chaucer's dialect. Cf. nevertheless *Cleanness*,

831: Welawynnely wlonk tyl þay waschen hade
1501: So þe worcher of þis worlde wlates þer-with
541: Lo! suche a wrakful wo for wlatsum dedez

Cf. also *William of Palerne*, 1634:

but now a while wol i stinte of þis wlonke murþe [=proud mirth]

B 4414. The *Oxford Dictionary* perfectly establishes the use of *gladly* in the sense of "usually," "habitually," and even the editors of Chaucer are beginning to take notice of the fact. The following are examples of the usage later than any given by the said *Dictionary*. I have some doubt about the case from Milton.

Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey (quoted in *Anglia*, XXIX, *New Series*, XVII, 335):

Who *gladly* halsethe ye golden meane
Voyde of dayngers advisedly hath his home.

Ascham, *The Scholemaster* (Ascham, *English Works*, ed. W. A. Wright, p. 224): Yet euen those that be learned and wittie trauelers, when they be disposed to prayse traueling, as a great commendacion, and the best Scripture they haue for it, they *gladlie* recite the third verse of Homere in his first booke of Odyssea, etc.

Watson (quoted by Ascham, *loc. cit.*):

All trauellers do *gladly* report great prayse of Vlysses.

Milton, *Comus*, 410-13:

but where an equall poise of hope and feare
dos arbitrate the event my nature is
that I incline to hope rather then feare
and *gladly* banish squint suspicion.

Cf. also the use of French *volontiers* as in Machaut, *Le Dit du Lyon*, 1917-18:

Et pour ce qu'on dit que cremour
N'est pas *volontiers* sans amour, etc.,

and in Hugo, *Les Misérables*, Part 1, Book 5, Chapter 3, Paragraph 3: Il emportait *volontiers* un fusil dans ses promenades, mais il s'en servait rarement. This use of *volontiers* is very common in present-day French.

B 4446. *colde*. We still say *cold comfort*. In *William of Palerne*, 1656, we have *kares colde*; in *Sir Ferumbras*, 4213, we have *cold ys my red*; and in the *Roman de Troie* we have frequently the phrase "cold news." Cf. Herodotus 6. 108: *ἐπικουρίη ψυχρή*, and Euripides *Alceste* 353: *ψυχρὰν μὲν οἶμαι τέρψιν*.

B 4573. *Talbot* as the proper name of a dog appears in a song quoted by Padelford (*loc. cit.*):

Talbot, my hounde, with a mery taste
All about the grene wode he gan cast.

It is barely possible, though not more than barely, that Chaucer's use of *Talbot* as the proper name of a dog was suggested by the lyric poetry of his day. *Talbot* is also a common noun signifying a large, white or light-colored hound, having hanging ears, heavy jaws, and great powers of scent. This hunting dog was introduced into England by the Talbot family, but it is uncertain whether the family was named after the dog or the dog after the family. A pun upon the name of the species of dog and the name of the renowned enemy of Joan of Arc is found in *Political Songs* (Rolls Series, II, 222):

He is bownden that oure dore shulde kepe
That is *Talbott* oure goode dogge.

See *Oxford* and *Century Dictionaries* under *Talbot*.

B 4590. *skriked*. Cf. Defoe, *Captain Singleton* (ed. Aitken, p. 263): hallowing and *skreeking* in a manner that it is impossible to describe.

C 406. *a-blakeberyed*. Skeat pointed out the relation between the verbal in *-ed* and the Anglo-Saxon verbal in *-aȝ*, but the intermediate form in *-eth* is so rare that I will cite the following from *Sir Ferumbras*:

2222: & Summe a deer *hontep* of hem þar went! & some to fox and hare

3730: Rennyngge *a-streyey* þar on þe waye

5532: *A-strayey* on þe grene

With *a-strayey* for *a-strayeb* cf. the sixteenth and seventeenth century spelling *ye* for *the*, the *y* being used as a substitute for *þ*.

C 953. *seintuarie*, "a sacred object"; or, more exactly, used collectively for "sacred things." Not in the modern sense of "holy place." Instances of *saintuaire* in the sense of sacred object (not used collectively) are *Roman de Troie*, 25515-16:

Des *saintuaïres* plus preisiez
Ert li auteus pleins e chargiez;

and *Cligés*, 1194-96:

Tot le monde, encois an feist
Saintuaire, si con je cuit,
Si l'aorast et jor et nuit.

F 250. *he Moyses*. This use of a personal pronoun before a proper personal name occurs not only in the Scandinavian languages, but also and very frequently in Middle Welsh. Cf. *Mabinogion* (ed. Rhys and Evans), p. 19, ll. 26-27: *Hitheu riannon* a diuynnwys attei athrawon a doethon, *She Riannon* (it was) who summoned to herself doctors and sages; *ibid.*, pp. 11-12: *Rof i a duw heb ynteu bwyll llyna vy atdeb i ytti*, "Between me and God," said he Powell, "this is my answer to thee." The Welsh language applies the usage to common nouns as well as to personal names. Cf. *op. cit.*, pp. 78-79: *Sef a wnaeth ynteu yr eryr*, this (is) what *he the eagle* did.

III

The Franklin's Tale.—In *The Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, XVI, 406, Professor Schofield, the author of a *History of English Literature from the Norman Conquest to Chaucer*, which no competent person will fail heartily to praise, suggested that "a careful analysis of the *Franklin's Tale* reveals the fact that at

bottom it is a simple story of an unusually happy marriage between the British Lord Arveragus and his beautiful wife Dorigen." I have never been able to understand this contention. To me the marriage referred to seems to be merely the background of the story, which is itself concerned not with married happiness, but with an interruption in married happiness; and tells of a wife by the seashore bewailing the absence of her husband at sea; of a husband not only resigning his wife when he is bound by every consideration of honor to retain her, but actually so far forgetting all "gentillesse" as to threaten her with death in case she should reveal his ignominious conduct; and of a woman pursued by attentions which are equally unwelcome and unlawful.

Professor Kittredge in his *Chaucer and His Poetry*, page 45, remarked, "Few facts of history, be it sacred or profane, are more solidly established than that Geoffrey Chaucer, in his habit as he lived, was not naïf. . . . Chaucer was admittedly a humorist, and naïveté is incompatible with a sense of humor." I do not find as a matter of ordinary observation that contradictions are so nicely excluded from human nature. And in literary history, if we find Wordsworth, one of the distinctly great and enduring British poets, frequently falling into the sorriest kind of prose, prose that no versification can disguise, we need not be surprised if we find Chaucer, a consummate humorist, falling at times into something distinctly naïve.

At any rate, no word seems to me so happily to characterize certain features of the *Franklin's Tale* as does the word naïve. An important theme running through Chaucer's story, the essential theme of the story as we have every reason to suppose that he found it, is the sacredness of a promise. Could anything be more naïve than to treat the casual promise of Dorigen, which was intended to be absolutely ironical, as more binding than her marriage vow, which had been made quite literally? Dorigen's promise to Aurelius was only a rhetorical way of saying that she never would desert her husband for the young man who was paying her his addresses. In treating her answer literally, as if she were making a bargain (rather than expressing with the utmost possible emphasis her determination to remain loyal to her husband), Aurelius really forfeited all claim to be considered "gentle," generous, or even honorable.

Nor is it enough to say that this was all in the story as Chaucer found it, and that in accepting what he found Chaucer by no means incurs a charge of naïveté. There are other features of the story which may even have been Chaucer's addition to the naïveté of his original. Do Dorigen and Aurelius meet by accident or by design of Aurelius in F 1499-1508? Chaucer (shall we not say naïvely?) assures us that they meet both by accident and by design. And how is it that nobody, neither Dorigen, Arveragus, nor the poet himself, shows the slightest sign of being either shocked or amused when the knight who has promised to continue into married life the homage of courtship suddenly threatens her with death if she disclose their secret (F 1481-84)?

Evidently the beauty of the *Franklin's Tale* is of that naïve order found in the primitives of the Italian Renaissance, paintings which freely violate the anatomy and perspective that have become basic to nearly all modern European art, but which nevertheless command the enthusiastic admiration of the more intelligent observers by the beauty that remains, and even seems to be enhanced by what is lacking. There are in the *Franklin's Tale* various truly charming descriptions, there are delicate sentiments, and the character of Dorigen is in itself a masterpiece.

It has often been observed that Chaucer's insistence on "the grisly rokkes blake" and on the horrors of shipwreck is a mark of local color connecting the story with Brittany. A few sentences from the *Pierre Nozière* of Anatole France descriptive of the Breton coast furnish admirable illustration: "The ocean and the cliffs change their appearance every minute. The billows are alternately white, green and violet; and the rocks which, a moment ago, were flashing their veins of mica, are now as black as ink" (p. 283); "It is still said that, on this shore, the souls in torment walk and weep, while the bones of those who have been shipwrecked knock at the doors of the fishermen and demand burial" (p. 286).

Further notes of local color are perhaps to be found in the description of Christmas festivities. I certainly suspect that the *bugle-horn* (F 1253) from which "Janus" drinks the wine is a Celtic note retained from Chaucer's source. The drinking-horn, of course, figures largely in Teutonic history and tradition, but I know no case

of its retention in ceremonial or festive usage so late as it was retained at Quimper in Brittany. In this town a cup formed of the horn of an urus, or wild ox, was retained in the ceremony of Saint Cecilia's Day until 1793. See Parède, *La Bretagne Poétique*, pp. 28-29. For the drinking-horn in early Celtic literature the *locus classicus* is perhaps in the very ancient tale of *Kulhwch and Olwen*, which twice uses the formula, "The knife is in the meat, and the drink is in the horn, and there is treading of feet in the hall," as an excuse for not opening the castle gate to a stranger. Cf. Rhys and Evans, *Red Book of Hergest*, I, 126: *kyllell a edyw ym bwynt a llynn ym bual*, *ac amsathyr yn neuad*; also p. 103, where we have exactly the same words except that *yn* is omitted before *neuad*.

I also suspect that F 1255,

And "Nowel" crieth every lusty man,

describes a custom more or less distinctive of Brittany, though not exclusively Breton.

F 734. *oon the faireste under sonne*. I will illustrate this idiom with examples drawn from a work of mine on Chaucerian syntax which is not yet published. *Faireste* is used as a substantive and in apposition with the numeral *oon*. That this is the correct way to parse the phrase is shown by a glance at examples of the same idiom in cognate Germanic dialects, for which I am indebted to Professors Einkenkel and Kellner:

Blickling Homilies, 73. 21: *paer waeron þreo þa betstan ele*, there three the best ointments.

Aelfric, *Exodus*, 32. 21: *ane þa maestan synne* and *gode þa lapustan*, a sin one the greatest and to God the most displeasing.

Iwein, 334: *ein das schoenste gras*, one the fairest grass.

Iwein, 1314: *si muose toten sehn einen den liebsten man*, she must see killed one the dearest man.

Reinaert (Flemish), 137: *ene die meste overdaet*.

Chaucer never uses the idiom with any other numeral than one, but examples with higher numerals occur in English even as late as the eighteenth century. The first three examples of those given below, as well as the seventh, are pointed out by Einkenkel or Kellner; the rest are of my own collecting:

Guy of Warwick, 8097: *Two the beste then slayne had y.*

Robert of Gloucester, *Chronicle*, 34: *þre þe beste yles.*

Trevisa, *Higden's Polychronicon* (Rolls Series), I, 199: Out of pilke hil[les] springeþ *þre þe noblest ryveres* of al Europa, pat beep i-cleped þe Ryne, Danubius, and Rone.

William of Palerne, 2162: *two þe bremest white beres* pat euer burn on loked.

Ibid., 3943-44:

& treuli astit after him' *two hundered & seuen*
þe realest rinkes of þe reaume' ded riȝt pat ilke

Ascham, *The State of Germany* (in *English Works*, ed. Wright, p. 163): And to let other matter of Germany passe, euen this last yeare within the compasse of eight monethes he professed himselfe open enemy against *four the greatest poweres* that I knowe vpon earth.

Spenser, *Faerie Queene*, I, vii, 8: The hight of *three the tallest sonnes* of mortall seed.

Thomas May, *History of the Parliament of England Which Began Nov. 3, 1640*: how wicked the manners of Rome were grown, how the chief rulers were given to avarice and oppression, and the whole state drowned in luxury, lusts and riot, as you may see upon that subject in *two the most elegant* of them [i.e., of the Roman poets].

Colley Cibber, *The Careless Husband*, Act 2, Scene 2: Now I think deferring a dun, and getting rid of one's wife, are *two the most agreeable sweets* in the liberties of an English subject.

F 942: *Withouten coppe* he drank al his penaunce. Professor W. A. Neilson has convinced me that in my *Notes on Chaucer* this passage is wrongly explained, and that *withouten coppe* means "under difficulties." The expression occurs twice in the pseudo-Chaucerian *Tale of Beryn*, thus:

306: ffor such was his fortune, he drank *with-out þe cupp*

460: He shall drynk for kittes love *with-out cup or pot*

"To drink one's woe," "penance," etc. is a figure of which Chaucer is very fond. Cf. *Troilus*, 2, 784; 3, 1035; 3, 1215-16; *Hous of Fame*, 3, 789-90. Every one will recall *Saint Luke* 21. 42: "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me." But it is worth adding that

Froissart represents love as a beverage. Cf. *Le Paradys d'Amours*, 676-78:

Encor croi que depuissedi
 Qu'au dieu d'Amours fesis hommage
 Tu as gousté de son *buwrage*.

And in the same poem (738-39) we are told that the god of Love makes one "drink good medicine":

Il *fait bon médecine boire*
 Dont on conforte sa santé.

F 1325. *but youre grace*. That this is better taken as meaning "without your permission" than "except your favor" is, I hope, too evident to require any argument. For *but*, or as it is sometimes spelled *boute*, in the sense of "without," cf. *William of Palerne*:

1704: Wiȝtly *boute* mo wordes' sche went fo[r]þ stille
 1882-83: þei ete at here ese' as þei miȝt þanne
boute salt oþer sauce' or any semly drynk

See also 1863, 2008, 2687, and Still, *Cottar*, 175 (A.D. 1845, cited by the *English Dialect Dictionary*):

Gie me the man, whate'er his creed,

 Wha speaks the truth *but* fear or dread.

The word *grace*, meaning "permission," occurs in the *Romaunt of the Rose*, 4079-80:

For no man moo into this place
 Of me to entre shal have *grace*.

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